

# DELTA

No. 21

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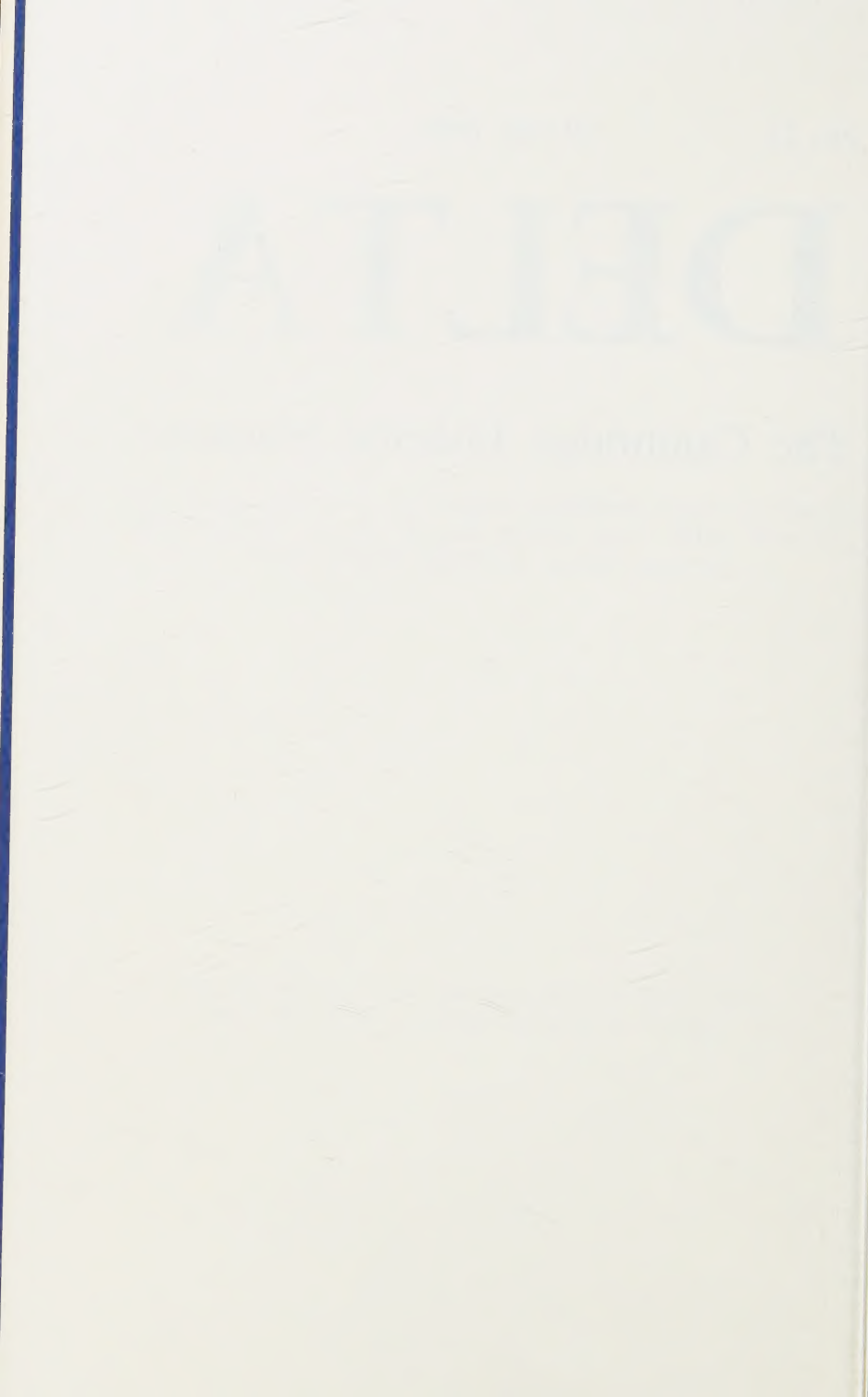
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# DELTA

The Cambridge Literary Magazine



# DELTA 21

EDITED BY ANDREW ROBERTS

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## Editorial

We are pleased to be able to mark the occasion of our twenty-first issue by printing once again a substantial amount of verse—and by reviewing a first book of poems by *Delta's* founder, Peter Redgrove. We are sorry that so few poems in this issue come from Cambridge, and those few from the editorial Establishment: we may seem to have abandoned our original intention to present “new talent, new expression, however fragmentary and unformed it may be,” but the plain fact is that what was rejected really didn't seem to have any talent worth encouraging.

\* \* \*

It has been rare in this century for a full intelligence to find poetry a satisfactory medium of expression, and no doubt the enthusiasm aroused by Ted Hughes' latest book *Lupercal* stems at least partly from a surprised delight at finding a poet whose work vividly and accurately reflects a clearly personal response to life. But the surprise and delight hasn't noticeably been tempered by any awareness that, however relatively distinguished Mr. Hughes' work may be, his much-praised animal vigour is, on reflection, a very partial achievement. There is some danger, amid such enthusiasm—and as in the case of another poet with a highly developed “technique”, Charles Tomlinson—of forgetting the real possibilities of poetic technique. Criticism has suffered much recently from a general failure to appreciate the proper function of poetry, to understand what poetry—as against the novel, the film, or anything else—could and ought to be doing. Poems continue to be written, but too much from force of habit rather than any conscious determination to present experience in a new way, to alter people's habits of thought and feeling. What one misses, in looking through the latest Guinness anthology—certainly a very fair cross-section—is any sense of elevation from the loose, casual language of everyday prose: there may be sensitivity, there may be wit, there may even be high spirits, but there is no tension, no insistent personal rhythm forcing upon us a living imagination. The “esemplastic” power is what is so conspicuously absent, and it may well be that this is precisely because the creation—the *poiesis*—of an imaginative—and not merely conceptual—synthesis of experience now requires a degree of conscious application of intelligence far beyond the reach of *l'homme moyen sensitive*. Despite some recent appeals to learn from America, it's not simply a Little England rut: our life is horribly verbalised, and poetry undoubtedly suffers when the strength of language is sapped by doing duty for other media of expression.

For most civilised people—especially in this country—live by far too few senses, tending to judge all art by its literary associations: indeed, such a condition of imaginative starvation might often be the most appropriate definition of “civilisation”. In a pulp-fed age, there is an inevitable tendency to judge everything indiscriminately



by its explicit "content", its story—this is, of course, the glaring weakness of British film reviewing (and for that matter, the British cinema). There is a reluctance to admit that the moral nature of man is reflected no less in what we see and hear than in what we say—that the film, for example has its own special, visual resources for commenting on life, that its "technique" inevitably reflects some sort of moral attitude. We are conditioned to suppose that words are the only language: everything else is "beautiful", but not instructive—except in so far as a story can be squeezed out of it. It is a failure to recognise this situation which seems the radical weakness of Professor Barzun's recent book (reviewed elsewhere in these pages). Barzun's plea for what he calls "intellect" might merit discussion of, instead of dismissing "quartet playing and amateur ceramics" as worship of the "torturing indefinite", he had been able to explore the way in which different senses and different artistic media play their part in the definition and communication of experience. (Deryck Cooke, in his valuable *The Language of Music*, aptly quotes Mendelssohn's remark that the feelings expressed in music "are not too indefinite to be put into words, but on the contrary too definite.") In effect, Barzun is arguing—like other Americans, one gathers—for education "like grandpa had"—for a return to vigorous mental discipline such as is supposed to be provided by a classical education: but properly valuable habits of precision can't surely be inculcated by restricting archaically the subject-matter of formal education. More than ever, in a world dominated by man-made objects, by mass-production, the conurbation and the photograph, we need training in the use of our eyes as well as our "brains"—and we might talk less glibly about the "music" of poetry if we were taught how to listen to music itself. (What can Dr. Broadbent mean by the "symphonic" structure of *Paradise Lost*?) If an education in the humanities is to mean anything, it must emphasise that a full and discriminating enjoyment of art—including the novel—isn't something that can be "picked up" by any intelligent person: it can only be acquired through a respect for and proper training in the required modes of sensibility. Only in this way, by giving the human intelligence free play over more than the manipulation of mathematical and linguistic symbols, can even the limited faculty of "intellect" be defended against the more insidious encroachments of what Professor Barzun despises as the "inarticulate" media. It may be that a clearer recognition of how other aesthetic techniques implicitly serve a moral purpose may be of service to poetry in enabling us to conceive more clearly what words, as opposed to other forms of language, can peculiarly achieve in extending our imaginative knowledge. We may then demand a more comprehensive notion of poetic technique—as nothing less than an index of the range of a poet's moral imagination—than we are willing to accept in the present plethora of the barely competent.

## *Afternoon Coffee in Autumn*

I have talked an hour in the sun, saying nothing  
Listening to several voices, in the white rotunda.  
They speak largely of small things, overreach the wind  
That settles like a flock of twenty birds, straining  
The flaking eucalyptus. We talk of words.  
We tell what words tell, only with a purpose  
That unmasks the voices of all but the trees  
Leaving us kings of wind that has no meaning.

I say us, but I kept silent. Words thief meanings  
And I felt very poor, aware of others' momentary losses  
Voices around me, fluting down empty bottles  
The shrill whine of beetles' wings among the spines  
Of the grass.

Farther down the hill, children's  
Songs crept with bare-soled whispers through the sun  
Like pricks of shadow in noonlight haze  
Circling, shouting, swift, broken-winged  
Last members of the tribe. Growing, unknowing  
They play their games as Mozart touched his strings  
The first time, with the assurance of meaning, on a  
Heightened stool. They play as I remember play  
Not as a jury trial of words, not as falling leaves.

There may be hope in their gestures. There was defiance  
In sitting silent while the wind blew loose  
The tightly pin-held hearts of others around.  
Two stone lions turned their backs on us  
Old and stupid as the warming sun; and I  
Seeing their shadows move in unison across the ground  
Know things that grow are worthy to be praised

And things that cannot talk grow hard and grey  
Being made old at first hand. But these voices pretend  
No longer startled, words repeat the same  
Old quarrels with their loneliness, and no one cares.

DAVID WEVILL.



## *Beginning of a Movement*

Blue the burnt mountains now, ash at sunset, half  
Dust and half whitening grass. This the late season for flying  
insects, beetles  
Coleoptera, dragonflies; the nervous trespassers who will  
Mate before the grass is fired around the blind villages.  
Here, far west of Japan the dragonflies join  
Gliding across the kite and vulture waste, the tall temples of broad  
pine, the broken-backed hill  
Chasing the eye like maple-seeds. Autumn is not a season here  
But a dry throat thirsting through dust for wine.

Yet what we see now or have seen is a mood  
Held for a moment's rest. The hunter, his eyes like  
Cartridges, quick, rambles through the undervaulted forest  
And kills because he knows what he must see.  
So the egret on his branch, carved in black iron  
Draws the fire of sunset about his quills, and nods us past as though  
trusting us,  
Two mindless walkers in the washed sea of the plain  
Beneath his horizon. To be found, a fish in this sea of eyes  
Visible, desired by that bird, would be  
To sink forever with the sun, forgetting the dragonflies.

## *Transfusion*

Out of the farthest forests you could have heard  
The knocking of high spars in the wind; a cold wind  
Running carelessly like stags along the rash  
Streets of deserted summer towns. I have often blessed this  
emptiness,  
Full-voiced and hollow as the jackal's hide  
Of nervous evenings, where memories await  
The hard spurred battle between two cocks of blood  
Sailless, floundering in a sea of dust.

One dies; the other flaunts along the wind  
His spread tail-feathers, treading the careful earth, blind and  
clear as night.  
The wind dies. Green neon rods of light  
Shame the purely darkening pagoda cones,  
As fir-cones will crumble trembling like dice after the throw,  
Trembling to the rock of barefoot-pressured earth.  
The hard sun cakes:  
Midnight spreads out beads of poison glass,  
Webs of infamy and hope, cold nursing fingers  
Through earth's fevers. All time could sleep and sleep,  
A dead child on the shoulder of a nun.

DAVID WEVILL.

## *World as a Man*

Earth breathes in city vents, in sulphur lakes.  
Over, on pygmy nets, we climb and crawl  
Till lines and language stop; the shrivelled crust  
Contracts, and rock replies in spout and quake.

Our captive's negro: bush his crinkly hair;  
Scorched into blackened earth his tribal scars;  
Sweat or pus run deep in Niger mud,  
Crescent desert, cancers under snow.

We prize our shrunken head: a curio  
Shown to a guest, a party ornament;  
Hardly worth dusting, though, when maids are scarce  
And there's still so much else to be busy about.

The whirling brain blows up to bursting point.  
By self-drawn halos hourly canonised  
The enormous death's-head swells to include all space,  
Felled from the starving body bears our wounds.

ANDREW ROBERTS.

## *The Gates of Paradise*

Light flashes out of a constant city:  
Dazzled, we ask ask of her brilliant flowers  
Uses beyond the gallery,  
The quick confused hour.

Their service to God or gods  
Let them at last resume:  
Paintings in church or villa,  
Ash-chests in family tombs.

. . . . .

Greek boys and Poseidons  
The Aegean drowned  
The ages colour  
Gold, green and brown.

. . . . .

The missing frame,  
The correct podia—  
Brushed chiselled: the 'will to form'  
Once, in the studio.

Heaven and hell take care of  
Their earthly types.  
Michelangelo declared  
Ghiberti's doors the Gates of Paradise.

ANDREW ROBERTS.

## *Cypress*

*(For Fulvio and Barbara Furiani)*

The ever green and mortal cypresses  
Rise in the ever rising and setting sun.  
Nothing in the landscape seems hopeless.  
Nothing in the landscape is human.

Nothing seems hopeless, although it is,  
Because in this beauty there is no hope,  
No need but for centuries of peace,  
A seeming eternity of recurrent shape.

Each leaf and fruit, after its kind,  
Fills out a pattern never to be justified.  
No earth becomes rock, no rock is ground  
According to laws that may change or be denied.

Nature is a closed circuit in no way sublime.  
The wave or the leaf turns, overturns in the wind.  
Nothing has more or less meaning than time.  
The shark in the water glitters like a cloud.

The swimmer's fear alone can disclose or create  
And gifts the sea and shore with familiar gods  
Who, with their alien power, compose his fate  
In return for bread and wine and diviner odes.

The cypress rises at the limit of joy  
So that the hand that writes need not tremble  
And the heart, believing or not, sufficient to the day,  
Prefers kinship to comfort. And all is well.

The eyes that are raised in civilised pride  
On fields and cities and gardens also master  
The rise and fall of land that has run wild,  
Or was never of use, with lonely pleasure.

Seed to flower, foliage to stone, commanded  
By time without hours, immortally imperfect,  
Fixed for a moment is changed for a moment and made  
To seem a frivolous, grave, unemphatic art.

Words rise, at this limit of life,  
Sweeter than communication, clear and perilous,  
With the abstract intonation of extreme grief,  
An irretractible blessing on Esau's house.

Before dead leaves on the wind, or a word thought of,  
Even the gods accept to be helpless.  
Only death itself and the cares of love  
Grace the ever green and mortal cypress.

ANNE CLUYSENAAR.

## *The Farm*

Standing on top of the hay  
in a good sweat,  
I felt the wind from the lake  
dry on my back,  
where the chaff  
grew like the down on my face.

At night on the bare boards  
of the kitchen,  
we stood while the old man  
in his nightshirt gummed  
the hard crusts  
of his bread and milk.

Up on the gray hill  
behind the barn, the stones  
had fallen away  
where the Pennacook marked  
a way to go  
north from the narrow river.

DONALD HALL.

## *The Idea of Flying*

The wings lacking a trunk  
flap like a sail. Body  
strains, follows, and stiffens the  
walking of grand jellies.

The quick float is the sense  
flying becomes. Smooth in  
void space the talent of  
speed is unheard pounding.

It weighs air. In the wind,  
blank at the low margin,  
high cuts in solids of  
wind are the stone footsteps.

Unbent, loosed in the thin  
sky and the walked heaven,  
look, how the body of  
space is a steep dying.

DONALD HALL.



## *On a Horse Carved in Wood*

The horses of the sea; remember  
how the sea paws at its moving floor,  
charging and failing. The mane on his  
neck arched exactly in strength matches  
the tail at the bend of waves breaking  
on opposite shores. He is the king  
of the wild waves, charging and failing.  
When Master Zeus struck from the North, he  
drove Poseidon the Horse to the sea.  
Sacred to Poseidon are both the  
nimble dolphin and the stiff pine-tree.

DONALD HALL.

## *Conventions of Death*

We live under the stately mushroom shadow—  
A cliché to walk with going up Bond Street.  
The dead, parked in the Triumph dealer's window,  
Are this year's models, require no upkeep.

Isolated by what I want, calling it love,  
I do not feel them dead, I think them pretty.  
No loving goose-flesh on the skin they're made of,  
Their sane madness built and skinned the city.

What I want is a particular body,  
The further particulars being obscene  
By definition: the obscenity is really me,  
Mad, Wanting mad possession: what else can mad mean ?

Mad can be put upon a bed and watched,  
Do tests, get E.C.T., pile blocks,  
Get cured; its snake of brain is scotched  
But waits in faces, phone calls, letters, clocks.

Love winces once and then the mad lie low.  
Skulking in frail beer joys then  
I try to make a lying philosophy go:  
We are all doomed, all men and women.

So give up thinking, work hard, buy a car,  
Get married, keep a garden, bring up kids—  
Answers to all the problems that there are,  
Except the love that kills, the death that lives.

PETER PORTER.

## *Winter Fuel*

You saw the random freehold near the road  
Which raised me up, but vouched no further gift;  
Surveyed the fenceless, commonplace surroundings,  
Ignored my mute refusal of a lift,  
And severed me from my unseeded grounding:  
Being just what you needed, I was stowed  
Behind you, in the boot. That night it snowed.

At home you introduced me, taking care  
To stress that I was your concern alone;  
You barred your sisters from the preparations,  
Unpacked the glittering costume long outgrown  
By last year's unmourned guest, his decorations  
You pinned on me, your hands reached everywhere  
Parting my spiky, uncontrollable hair.

I was your new and all-absorbing task;  
I, all my life untrimmed, uncultivated,  
The guest of honour in your drawing-room,  
Installed with pomp, as circumstance dictated,  
Suffused with light, immaculately groomed,  
My presence set your household all agasp—  
Such lights, such bells, such ornaments of glass !

But twelve-nights wonder proved a masquerade,  
The tinsel fretted, lights and bells grew dim,  
The offerings I assembled on my arms  
Once opened, lost their glamour; taste or whim  
Broke this, discarded that; so few retained their charms.  
Some grew at once familiar, others stayed  
Admired, but at a distance, in my shade.

A thirteenth morning would profane the rite,  
So servants stripped me of your attributes,  
The mistletoe came down, and I departed  
Trailing my coat, inviting no salutes,  
To end as kindling when a new fire started;  
Ash on the boots of guests whom you'll invite  
When Easter blossoms, and you walk in white.

WILLIAM DUNLOP.

## *Meditation on His Ninety-first Year*

This withered clutch of bones, this hand, that held  
Two oxen and a plow steadily down  
An even furrow, now scarcely can hold  
The heavy reading-glass. An April sun  
Could bring me to a sweat when my thin blood  
Was warmer; now I'm tissue-dry and shake  
In any breeze that giddies this grey head.  
"The years have flown," a fellow patriarch  
Is fond of saying, but as I reflect  
Upon nine decades ripening steadily,  
Each measured year maturing, act by act,  
I wonder at him—could his memory  
Remain so barren that life disappears  
Into a limbo of forgotten years?

It's pleasant for me now to spin the past:  
A boyhood full of cows and berry-vines,  
Hay-ricks and wild birds, the journey west  
When I was seventeen, the evergreens  
And rivers and the rocks . . . I took a wife  
The fall that my first crop was harvested  
And she was fruitful; under our first roof  
We reared four sons to carry on the blood.  
I've planted every year, yet never known  
Two springs so much alike I could not tell  
One from the other; no two days have been  
Identical, and I can still recall  
Each acre tilled, each crop or foal or calf . . .  
The living things—these are my epitaph.

The doctor tells me I should not expect  
To live forever. After he has gone  
I smile to think that he, at thirty-eight,  
Cannot conceive how well, at ninety-one,  
I have accepted this absurd remark.  
Today the teacup chatters at my teeth;  
I feel the room grow colder, and I break  
With reveries, and vague regrets that growth  
Is over, that the blood wears out, and then  
No more of things that breathe and climb, no more.  
But, though I feel the minutes growing thin  
And I've torn the last page from the calendar,  
I cannot grudge the passing of my breath—  
After so much of life, so little death.

JOHN HAAG.

## *Message from Philoctetes*

Voyager, you've no reason to avoid  
This island now, for I have taught my will  
Much to subdue the odor of my wound.

A slight limp shouldn't offend your eye, nor shall  
Outcries disturb you—I no longer rent  
This insular air with shrieks, although I still

Groan in difficult nights. But I'll sleep apart  
Not to perturb your ordinary ease.  
Truly, the sore yet festers, but content

Yourselves—the bandage always stays in place;  
And least of all need you to fear infection—  
Only the bitten suffer my disease.

Or does my fabulous bow stir apprehension  
That keeps you distant? I, of necessity,  
Fashioned my weapon—no divine invention

This, but shafts in a bundle cleverly  
Dispersed in flight (one usually finds the mark).  
It compensates for my infirmity.

So come, for I petition all who look  
For fresher soil responsive to the hand.  
Explorer, traveler, settler, disembark:

Here, down the harmless hillsides, berries bend,  
Sweet waters leap in fascinating forms  
And game, abundant, fattens in a land  
I long to share with more than the waiting worms.

JOHN HAAG.

## Le Comte

(Extract from a novel)

"Now, look at me. Do I make you feel sick—like Georges de Masseur, so horrible, with his narrow, brown little body, like an old man dried up in the sun, a fig, that man, a withered fig, don't you think? But do I make you sick? No? No? And why not? Well you see, it's a secret—this is the trick—'*il faut trouver un truc, alors*'—I am"—and he would lower his voice to a conspiratorial whisper—"I am comical. You laugh at me, you see. Don't you? The other day I heard a little English thing say to her mother, in her bright, clanging English voice, 'Well, I think he's sweet!'" Here the Comte did an imitation, his own rather soft and even voice rising to an almost incredible pitch. It was a very bad imitation, but the funnier for being so. "Yes. You laugh at me, see and that is better than being found disgusting, like the horrible Georges."

"But I don't laugh at YOU. I was laughing at your imitation. It's very—funny."

"Ah, but inwardly you laugh at me—in myself, don't you? Come, confess to me now. You laugh at me, don't you. And why? Because I want you to laugh at me, that's why. So I wear this bathing costume—so ugly, these bathing costumes—but such good disguises, because then you know I'm not trying to hide myself away from you. Yes?"

"No. Not at all. To tell you the truth, I don't even think about it."

The Comte, in fact, was not funny. His eyes were dark blue, wide, innocent, like a baby's, with all the secret, malicious guile of a baby's. And with all the narcissism of a baby. His nose, flanked by the two full, pink cheeks, was narrow and fine, arching slightly at the tip, and his mouth was small and delicate, like a girl's. He was about fifty-five, and had lost almost all his hair, except at the sides of his head, where it fuzzed out just above the ears in silk tufts. From the back, as he waddled across the beach nearly nude, he was absurd. From the front, in full view of the fine, gleaming face, he looked dangerous.

He would invite Logan to his house for dinner; he was pleased to have this young man about him, to listen to him, to be, in his distant, English way, interested. He was, he used to say, sick of all the nobles *manqués* of Nice, and could not bear their company. "Ah, the vulgarity of these delicate, sophisticated people. To them where is the difference between a Mozart symphony and a good meal at André's? None. This is the jaded palate of the rich. But me—at least I am *moi-même manqué*, honest in my deception, don't you think? I know my own failure, that at least is honest." And he would laugh loudly, in his musical, modulated way, showing pink, firm gums beneath pointed, slightly canine teeth. At first Logan assumed he was homosexual, and rather avoided him, but once the Comte reproached him, without anger, but with gentle bitterness.



"My dear young man, you don't think I am a *pedalle*, surely? Come, give me some credit for taste, if not for morals. Why do you avoid me, if you do not think that? Come, confess. You thought it, did you not? Well, I tell you now, so you need have no fears, and so I need not say it again, I am"—and his eyes, guileless, blue, and somehow deceitful, fixed Logan's—"I am nothing. I am not interested, in you or the others. To me you are all neuter. Which is to say, except to myself, I am neuter, and everyone else is the wrong sex." And he took Logan by the arm and led him to a bar.

Logan gave in, and visited the Comte quite often. He would be treated to a splendid dinner in the magnificently furnished flat, and he enjoyed the civilized luxury of the soft, neuter surroundings. Graceful, comfortable chairs, rich carpets, all patterned to a delicate attenuated sense of taste. "In my taste I am, I think, of *l'âge de raison*. This is real comfort, comfort to the eye, and comfort to the body." In his surroundings, the habitat he had built for himself, the Comte looked really elegant. By some subtle emanation of spirit, some modification from within, he gave the impression of a different, more civilized age. Even his sloppy clothes looked in place in the flat, as if they too were transformed by the certainty of the Comte's sense of tradition. He would preside at the head of the banquet *à deux*, seated at one end of the large dining-table, with Logan at the other. A solitary butler flitted formlessly about, performing by sleight of hand the delicate feats of service. The Comte would become quietly expansive in his gestures, perfectly manicured, pudgy hands weaving arabesques in the air as he talked. It was mostly for his conversation that Logan was attracted to him, and he would sit, spellbound, as the Comte moved animatedly from one anecdote to another. His face, at these times, would crinkle up, leaving little pots of baby-fat beneath the chin, and his eyes would glint at his guest with a certain ironic shrewdness. He stopped himself, once, in the middle of a story about the aristocratic-artistic milieu of Paris and said, "Ah, I know what you are thinking. You suspect that, for me, all of life is a stream of anecdotes. That I have no deep 'moral seriousness': but you see, that is the point—" he flung his short arms up in humorous protest—"really I am *all*, yes, all, deep moral earnestness. But in a passive way. I am a passive person, the last of my strain. All the energy of blood has gone from me. The tradition, yes, that is here"—placing his smooth hand on his heart, and then on his stomach—"but the blood, the strength of my ancestors, which is somewhere else, or should be somewhere else, ah yes, that is gone. I feel, I tell you this vulgarly, because a dear friend of mine once said it of me—she said, 'My dear Comte, you have been strained through the blanket of generations.' And it is true. I have known since I was a child that it is true."

The Comte's curious mixture of bogglesomeness and honesty appealed to Logan. He liked him, but he feared him slightly, also. Sometimes, beneath the sparkling surface, he sensed in the Comte a deep,

inner self-pity and bitterness, that was like a tide tugging at the base of the rocks. It was with a feeling of relief that he came to say goodbye.

"So you go back to Paris, eh? Yes, that is not a good thing. Paris, you know—" and he gestured significantly into space. They were standing by the great living-room windows, that opened out on to the tiled, white town and the great ocean beyond. The sea, from this distance, looked as if its fringes had been stained gold by the sun. The Comte was in his pajamas, discreetly embroidered silk, and a pair of espadrilles. He had thrown a beautiful English dressing-gown carelessly over his shoulders, and was smoking a Russian cigarette. "The first of the day, and the only one I can enjoy." He looked pathetic and rather wistful, as he stood with his beautiful, vulgar town stretching away to the shores of eternity behind him. Like a plump and spoiled child who wished he wanted something.

"Why do you go to Paris? Tell me that, why do you leave us—me—to go to Paris."

"Oh, I shan't be staying there long. I'm going back to London to stay with my family afterwards, and just wanted to say goodbye to Paris."

"And there is something there to say goodbye to? You feel that there is something in PARIS to say goodbye too."

Logan smiled awkwardly. He hated being pressed in this personal way by the Comte. "No. Not in Paris. But something of myself, perhaps, that I've left there."

"Ugh! You are being melodramatic. English people should not be melodramatic—or romantic—that is for the Italians. And the French, occasionally, even now."

"Yes, you're right. I'm sorry, but in a way it's true."

The Comte went on as if Logan had not spoken. He was abstracted, and he turned sideways to gaze out on Nice. "But still, I know what you mean. The end, perhaps? You feel it is the end of something? The end of what—an illusion, an idea? But Paris"—and he turned round to twinkle in his ancient, small boy way—"is fallen, is fallen, that great city. Do you not think? Are those not the words? I tell you, you are better here, where we give a — *panache* to our decay. Even poor little Georges de Masseur, so vulgar, so ugly, even he has a certain *panache*. But Paris—oh, so bleak, so dead. Why go? Yet you must visit your family? I see. So it is your family that calls you back, not this dead capital of ours. You must see your family?"

"I promised I would come back now."

"You promised them. You mean that you don't want to go back?"

Logan was getting impatient. He resented this sudden intrusion by the Comte, and his face was flushed. He said curtly: "It has nothing to do with wanting or not wanting. I have to go."

"Well, yes I see. So. You don't like your family, yet you MUST go back to them. Well. That is sad."

"I didn't say I didn't like them."

"Ah, of course, you didn't SAY you didn't like them, and that makes all the difference. I see."

"Anyway I can't stay. I'm leaving this evening, and I shall probably spend a week in Paris."

"So you said. So you said." The Comte's voice was sarcastic and he turned away from the window to waddle towards the door. He seemed to have forgotten Logan, who stood resentful, and slightly uneasy, at the window. He wondered if he was meant to go, but he thought the Comte did want to say goodbye to him properly. After a moment the Comte came back into the room, again. His face was smooth and smiling, now; he seemed to have forgotten the conversation of a moment ago. He came over to Logan, and stood beaming up at him like a pleased child.

"Here I am. You see, I didn't run off in a huff. If you MUST go, well then, you MUST go." He shrugged slightly, and suddenly thrust his fist out towards Logan. "Here. This is for you, eh? A souvenir from me, and you cannot refuse. No, positively not, because the gift is more to myself than you. Look." He opened his hand to reveal a golden brooch, glistening in the rays of the strong morning sun. "Here. Take it. It is for you, all right?" He dropped it into Logan's hand, and bounced back to the window, looking very pleased with himself, his little frame quite sprightly, his pure, pink face glowing with enthusiasm. To Logan he was a little absurd, a little pathetic, a little dignified.

"I shall be very pleased to accept it, Count. Thank you."

The Comte came back to him. "You see what it is? Don't you see—but that is the best part, its finest thing. Very subtle, oh very intricate. Look, I press here and—" he placed his thumb along the rim and squeezed slightly. There was a gentle click, and the cover of the brooch flew open. "See. Perfect. And the picture is there. But of course there is no picture—none at all, just now, and so I give it to you. I have no picture to put there. And to shut it, you just push down and voilà. Complete. Take it then."

Logan looked at the outside of the brooch carefully. It was of delicate gold, the centre, gleaming subtly from its polished surface. It looked very thin and fragile, as if it would snap into pieces at the slightest pressure. The rim was made up of precise, inter-twining leaves, curving in and out of one another, with almost invisible bands of gold worked in as the stem.

"Oh, it's beautiful. It really is. I don't think I could bear to put a picture inside it."

"Ah, yes. That is the point, is it not? But if you DO get a picture, then you must also get a chain, to hang it around your neck. But if you don't get a picture, then you will have to keep it, as I did, until you meet someone you want to give it to. But it is better

to have a picture, and a chain; it is meant for the neck, you see. A man's neck."

Logan smiled. "I'm very touched, Count. I really am. For your sake I hope I get a picture, sometime."

"But no picture just now, is that it? Yes, I see. Well, you want to wait, do you? Perhaps it is best, to wait. But no one at all?"

"I haven't even thought about it."

"No, of course not. So English that—so English—you have the most barbaric upbringing in the world, worse even than the French."

"Perhaps you are right. I don't know yet."

The Comte looked at him testily. His eyes were gleaming, almost greedily, as if he received an inverted miser's pleasure from giving away. "Well, you must go. Take my brooch and leave, and perhaps some day I shall see you again." He held out his hand, and for the first time Logan noticed, with a small shock, that the Comte wore no ring of any kind. He was surprised that he hadn't seen this positive, even conclusive, absence before. He shook hands and turned towards the door, with the Comte tripping beside him, the long dressing-gown trailing out behind like a trousseau. At the door they shook hands again, and the Comte called out: "I WILL see you again, perhaps. Let us hope so."

SEBASTIAN HOWE.

## *Fin de Tout*

*Dos pou sto, kai kosmon kineso.*

Sincère en tant que sensuel,  
Hypocrite intellectuel,  
Il avait ces velléités:

Sauver le monde; et pas lui-même:  
S'exprimer; à la fois se taire . . .

Célébrer son jour de fête,  
Grand *ju-ju* de Lambaréné,  
A une table décorée  
Avec des feuilles d'ananas,  
Des aiguilles de pins des Vosges . . .

Voir enfin les correspondances  
De Platon et de Swedenborg,  
De Gérard et de Baudelaire;  
La Résurrection du Corps . . .

Le cerveau crève de science.

EUMOLPUS.

# *Puking Putsch-pen's Pack of Puckered Patter*

## *A Poke to Pick a Picque*

It's quite impossible to tell  
What's going to follow this poem.  
The villain is this villanelle.

No doubt you think you'd do as well  
At work in this poetic seam.  
It's quite impossible to tell,

But if your verse becomes a shell  
Cracked only under critic steam  
The villain is this villanelle.

What really makes a poem sell—  
Verse, or the visionary gleam?  
It's quite impossible to tell

But if you bottle up a yell  
Or cut and cover up a dream  
The villain is this villanelle.

Have rhymes and numbers spun a spell  
Denying me a nobler theme?  
It's quite impossible to tell.  
The villain is this villanelle.

EUMOLPUS.

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## BOOKS RECEIVED

- J. B. Broadbent, *Some Graver Subject: An Essay on Paradise Lost* (Chatto & Windus, 30/-).  
H. Coombes, *T. F. Powys* (Barrie & Rockliff, 18/-).  
Ronald Duncan, *The Solitudes* (Faber & Faber, 12/6).  
Lawrence Durrell, *Collected Poems* (Faber & Faber, 21/-).  
*The Guinness Book of Poetry*, 1960 (Putnam, 10/6).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*The Idea of Flying* and *The Farm* first appeared in *Frisco*; *On a Horse Carved in Wood* in *The Nation*; and *The Gates of Paradise* and *World as a Man* in *The Trifler* (1958).



## *Versvs Ad Honorem Diei Natalis*

M PETRONII D . . . . ARBITRI

SALUTATIONS presented to the Founder and President of the Experimental Theatre Group of Cambridge University (late returned from its second Continental Tour) at the Orgies held in celebration of his Twenty-First Birth-Day; upon which Occasion he appeared in the character of Petronius Arbiter, Knight, of Rome, and the writer of these verses in that of a centurion of the Seventeenth (Numidian) Legion.

ARBITER D . . . . ! you have come of age,  
And one who humbly serves you on the Stage  
Makes bold this Day to celebrate in Rhyme  
(Which shall remain, when Orgies yield to Time).  
Yet fear no Epicks ! for my fickle Muse  
Long since has left me, and I shan't abuse  
Your Magnanimity, that's so well known  
Whether by *Leman*, *Isère*, *Cam*, or *Rhône*.  
My name's *Eumolpus* but I'm not the same;  
As that so wretched Bard who bore this name  
In your renown'd *Satyricon*: my Boasts  
Treat of far nobler Themes, and further Coasts.  
No Imitations, turning bad to worse—  
Life is my Matter, not another's Verse.  
Action and acting—all's the same to me  
(Particularly when the journey's free).  
In arms for *Nero*, 'gainst the savage Tribe,  
I found fresh strains, my Triumphs to describe.  
{ From hackney'd fields, the notes are forc'd and few;  
Obscureness argues but a narrow view:  
I've ranged from *Zanzibar* to *Timbuktu*.  
*Eumolpus Africanus* I am called,  
And—but I see your interest has palled.  
Patron ! I trust that Life all Joys may send  
*Petronius Gallicanus*, to the end !

(*Advertisement*)

## Book Reviews

### 'THE HOUSE OF INTELLECT', by Jacques Barzun.

(Secker & Warburg, 32/6)

Professor Barzun's concern is with "the ignorance of the educated and the anti-intellectualism of the intellectuals". He calls his book a 'pathology' of corrupt standards in "the most developed, the most serious, the most highly regarded efforts in any relevant kind". Specifically his description is of America, though, by implication (as he says in his Note to the Reader) it is of "the entire Western world". The House of Intellect is that authority—primarily one assumes it must spring from the universities—by which real standards of thought are maintained, the authority that makes a common intelligence, governed by mutually recognised standards, possible. Intellect, however, is not intelligence: for Professor Barzun intelligence is the native wit that is organised by Intellect—Intellect is "... intelligence stored up and made into habits of discipline, signs and symbols of meaning, and spurs to emotion." The guardians of Intellect are the intellectuals, and it is to 'disease and incongruity' amongst the intellectuals that he aims to direct our attention. He describes, for instance, how Intellect is threatened at college by concentration on 'creativity'; or elsewhere, by what he calls the 'cult of art' (the three enemies of Intellect are Art, Science, and Philanthropy) whose emphasis on the 'torturing indefinite' is at odds with Intellect's chief virtue—'articulate precision'.

I hope, in summarising, I have not misrepresented Professor Barzun's idea of Intellect, for on it depends the whole value of his book. His undertaking is more than descriptive: *The House of Intellect* is a serious attempt at a diagnosis whose corollary is an assertion of real standards in the face of ones that have become corrupt. He makes this assertion through his word 'Intellect'; and we ought to test his criterion not so much by its general definition but by his *use* of the word. What positive values emerge from his diagnosis, and give force to his judgements of rejection? Here one ought to pay the highest tribute to the seriousness of Professor Barzun's endeavour by testing these values as severely as one can: and here it seems to me there is a weakness in his thought which inevitably proves disabling. Inevitably, because if the values that emerge appear to be unsound, then not only will the grounds for his diagnosis be unsound, but his sense of what is *relevant* to it will be faulty: simply, he will not know what are the most developed and the most serious efforts that call for his attention. I ought to make it clear that I am with Professor Barzun in almost all he rejects: with most of his examples the qualities associated with Intellect serve him well enough as criteria. My objection is that consistently his examples are so simple: and that when faced with one demanding much more than the application of a certain amount of literate common sense his criteria appear painfully inadequate.

'the intellectual in the market-place'. The idea of Intellect may keep his spirits up, but he remains defeated, for it suggests to him only roughly defined grounds for declaring war on his culture.

The conditions that Professor Barzun describes are alarming enough. But the real warning of his book is the sight of a man intelligent enough to perceive these conditions, without the capacity to draw himself up out of them and react with more than anger. In his last chapter he makes the point that—

"... the indulgence of looseness and confusion in the domain of mind and fancy has gone so far that one may apprehend a fierce and no less stupid reaction towards the opposites—rigidity, punctilio, and moral brutality . . ."

Self-awareness is one of the 'master-virtues' of Intellect. Professor Barzun ought to ask himself how far these are the qualities of his own reaction.

I. D. MACKILLOP.

### 'THE COLLECTOR', by Peter Redgrove.

(Routledge & Kegan Paul, 12/6)

Peter Redgrove's volume can, in general, make no great claims. But among a great deal of unremarkable verse there are just two or three poems that stood out for me as rewarding; and to say this, today, should not imply faint praise. It should also be made clear that even the unremarkable verse exhibits a personal note that is likeable, and characteristic interests that give hope for the future.

Adverse criticism, I think, hinges on four or five aspects of his work that might, in the accepted sense, be termed undergraduate. Chief of these is probably a kind of subtle sentimentality, not of over-insistence or lushness (save in one case), but arising from jottings that have not been transmuted into poetic experience. "Early Morning Feed", for example, is strongly reminiscent of the *Guardian's* Women's page. But the poet's very lack of forceful utterance makes it difficult to establish the border between sentimentality and poetically embodied emotion (e.g. "Bedtime Story"), especially when we are dealing with the recurrent and obviously intensely personal theme of the family and the old house in which it grows up. In other poems there is a sense that the words are striving after the experience, with a corresponding hint of Hopkins:

*Now why faze the innocent slowcoach worm,  
The mother-of-pearl boned, lip-skirted snail?  
Worm's not lazy carrion! He skeins his toil-holes  
Lined with worm-sweat.*

Again the poet seems not to be aware of the essential limitations of those scraps of observation (there are several in this volume) that represent a "small moment" of incongruity or pathos, caught with some "poignant" piece of detail (see "Woman in a Flowered Dress"). On the other hand it is notable that the longest poems, the poems with the greatest pretensions, are the poems most effectively deadened by the rambling lifelessness of the rhythms and the numbing profusion of adjectives (see especially "Fiesta" and "Holy Week"). And poems can be indicated which are incomprehensible because a half-formed idea has been automatically verified, without being examined closely enough. We should note with pleasure that that fellowship of abstract entities which has provided the "insights" of poets during the last twenty-five years (The Tyrant, The Bard, The Hedonist, The Paranoid, etc.) have here only one true companion ("The Collector"), but the tone is the same:

*Caught in a fold of living hills he failed,  
For, out of his childhood, he had wandered on  
An alien soil.*

And in this poem we are unable to see where the poet himself stands.

None of these points, however, illuminates weaknesses of a radically disabling nature. And in the second poem in the book, "Against Death", the poet's characteristic preoccupations combine much more successfully than in others I have mentioned. The half-dozen lines in the middle, concerning the spider, admittedly represent for me a sudden failing of tone, to be related to the poet's repeated phrases of revulsion at insects and certain animals. But the poem recovers surprisingly and moves to an assured and un-sentimental close. The theme is once again that of the young family (or family-to-be) in the old house, and the preciseness of the married couple's emotion, the unobtrusive symbolism of the "birds in our roof", are the strengths that render successful the personal quirks of idiom and the felicity of lines such as these:

*And wind comes up the floorboards in a gale,  
So then we keep to bed: no more productive place  
To spend a blustery winter evening and keep warm.*

In the middle of the poem the images already thrown up are fused, by the precise ambivalence of the words chosen, in the vision of the future family:

*In our high-headed room we're going to breed  
Many human beings for their home  
To fill the house with children and with life,  
Running in service of the shrill white bodies,  
With human life but for sparrows in the roof,  
Wiping noses and cleaning up behind,  
Slapping and sympathising, and catching glimpses  
Of each other and ourselves as we were then,  
And let out in the world a homing of adults.*

While the personal idiom can be seen in the closing lines of the poem, describing some future corpse in the house:

*Some firm'd hurry it outdoors and burn it quick—  
We'd expect no more to happen to ourselves  
Our children gradually foregoing grief of us  
As the hot bodies of the sparrows increase each summer.*

"Against Death" is a relatively straightforward, though nonetheless effective poem, and we could not call it simple. No other single poem struck me as equal to it, but there are one or two which represent something more than mere undergraduate verse, in spite of flaws. Broadly speaking, when the "domestic" poems escape the sort of sentimentality I mentioned, they are more interesting ("Questions", "Old House") than the poems of violence, though "In Case of Atomic War" displays an infinite superiority to any Logue-type "Your beds are near sopping with blood!", and "To A Murderer who Dismembers" has a psychological as well as poetic accuracy. The note struck in my first sentence should be repeated in my last, but I would not like it to deter people from reading this volume. It is, for instance, a greater achievement than anything from our new school of much-praised academic versifiers.

TONY SCULL.



## NEW CONTRIBUTORS

ANNE CLUYSENAAR	Contributed to our Irish supplement, 1958; now living in Holland.
JOHN HAAG	American, teaching at Reading University; has published poetry in this country, and widely in the U.S.A.
I. D. MACKILLOP	Third year, reading English at Downing.
TONY SCULL	Read English at Pembroke; now works for W.E.A. in Bedford.
DAVID WEVILL	Teaches English at the University of Mandalay.

## DELTA COMMITTEE

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Contributions for next term's *Delta* should be sent to the new Editor, S. J. H. Gray (Trinity) or to Howard Burns (King's), not later than June 30th.

THE CONTEMPORARY POETRY AND MUSIC CIRCLE arranges readings by new as well as established poets of their recent work; and by critics, editors, and anthologists of verse that is particularly interesting them; on the second Monday of every month from October to May at 7 p.m. at 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, Kensington Road, London, W.8. The meetings are freely open to the public but a collection is taken. Monthly programmes and enquiries: Alec Craig, 4 Princes Court, Worsley Road, London, N.W.3.

## UNIVERSITIES POETRY 3

Contributions are invited for *Universities Poetry 3*, which will be published in October. This year the editors are Zulfikar Ghose (Keele), Andrew Roberts (Cambridge) and Christopher Williams (Oxford); several other Universities will be represented by Assistant Editors. Poems are eligible from (a) undergraduates, (b) graduates of 1959, and (c) overseas graduates at present in their first post-graduate year in this country. The following conditions should be noted: (i) No contributor to submit more than three poems. (ii) No payment will be made. (iii) Contributions will not be returned unless accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope. (iv) Poems already published are eligible, but indication of acknowledgements should be included. (v) Closing date is June 15th. (vi) All contributions, correspondence and enquiries must be directed to Zulfikar Ghose, 45 St. John's Avenue, London, S.W. 15, or Andrew Roberts (Trinity College, Cambridge).





